

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-22 (canceled without prejudice).

Claim 23 (currently amended): A crunch providing chewing gum ingredient suitable for incorporation internally into a chewing gum, said crunch providing ingredient which is being a granulated additive ~~for providing crunch to a chewing gum, said ingredient being incorporated internally into said gum wherein said crunch providing ingredient consists~~ consisting essentially of isomalt, ~~said ingredient~~ prepared by a process wherein isomalt is heated at a temperature of above 130°C, cooled to form a solid isomalt product and granulated to a particle size greater than 50 mesh.

Claim 24 (currently amended): The ~~chewing gum~~ crunch providing ingredient of claim 23 wherein said chewing gum is a sugarless gum.

Claim 25 (currently amended): The ~~chewing gum~~ crunch providing ingredient of claim 23 wherein said process further comprises dissolving isomalt in water to form a solution and heating said solution to above 130° prior to cooling.

Claim 26 (currently amended): The ~~chewing gum~~ crunch providing ingredient of claim 23 wherein said isomalt is heated to a temperature of above 145°C.

Claim 27 (currently amended): The ~~chewing gum~~ crunch providing ingredient of claim 26 wherein said isomalt is heated to a temperature of above 160°C.

Claim 28 (currently amended): The ~~chewing gum~~ crunch providing ingredient of claim 23 wherein said isomalt contains one or more flavoring agents.

Claim 29 (currently amended): The ~~chewing gum~~ crunch providing ingredient of claim 23 wherein said isomalt contains one or more dyes or colorants.

Claim 30 (currently amended): The ~~chewing gum~~ crunch providing ingredient of claim 23 having ~~wherein said granulated chewing gum ingredient has~~ a particle size greater than 40 mesh.

Claim 31 (currently amended): The ~~chewing gum~~ crunch providing ingredient of claim 30 having ~~wherein said granulated chewing gum ingredient has~~ a particle size range of 30 mesh to 40 mesh.

Claim 32 (currently amended): A process for the preparation of a ~~chewing gum~~ crunch providing ingredient for a chewing gum which is a granulated additive ~~for providing crunch to a chewing gum, wherein said crunch providing ingredient consists~~ consisting essentially of isomalt, said process consisting essentially of:

- a) heating isomalt at a temperature of 130°C or higher;
- b) cooling the heated isomalt to form a solid; and

- c) granulating said solid to a particle size greater than 50 mesh.

Claim 33 (original): The process of claim 32 wherein said chewing gum is a sugarless gum.

Claim 34 (original): The process of claim 32 which further comprises dissolving isomalt in water to form a solution and heating said solution to above 130°C prior to cooling.

Claim 35 (original): The process of claim 32 wherein said isomalt is heated to a temperature of above 145°C.

Claim 36 (original): The process of claim 35 wherein said isomalt is heated to a temperature of above 160°C.

Claim 37 (original): The process of claim 32 wherein said isomalt contains one or more flavoring agents.

Claim 38 (original): The process of claim 32 wherein said isomalt contains one or more dyes or colorants.

Claim 39 (currently amended): The process of claim 32 wherein the crunch providing ingredient ~~said granulated additive~~ has a particle size greater than 40 mesh.

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Claim 40 (currently amended): The process of claim 39 wherein the crunch providing ingredient ~~said granulated additive~~ has a particle size range of 30 mesh to 40 mesh.